

How Does Ellen G. White's 'The Great Controversy' Contradict the Bible?

Sixbert SANGWA • June 02, 2024

Ellen G. White's book "The Great Controversy" is a central text within Seventh-day Adventism, outlining the cosmic conflict between good and evil. As a prominent Adventist leader, White's writings are highly revered and considered to have divine inspiration. However, a careful examination of the teachings in "The Great Controversy" reveals numerous contradictions with the clear, authoritative teachings of the Bible. As Christians, we are called to test all doctrines against the ultimate standard of Scripture ([1 Thessalonians 5:21](#)). In this article, we will explore a few key areas where "The Great Controversy" departs from biblical truth.

Salvation by Works

A core tenet of "The Great Controversy" is the idea that salvation is earned through obedience to God's law and good works. On page 430, White writes, "None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict." This stands in stark contrast to the biblical teaching of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#), [Romans 3:28](#), [Galatians 2:16](#)). The Bible clearly states that we are justified by faith apart from works of the law ([Romans 3:28](#)) and that eternal life is a free gift, not something that can be earned ([Romans 6:23](#)).

The Sabbath and the Mark of the Beast

White emphasizes the observance of the Sabbath (Saturday) as a critical component of faith, arguing that Sunday worship is aligned with the mark of the beast (pp. 433-450). In fact, White's book places great emphasis on the observance of the Saturday Sabbath as a requirement for salvation. She states, "The observance of Sunday by the Protestant world, and the claim for authority to do this by the Roman Church, directly contradicts the plainly-stated requirements of God's word" (p. 653). However, the New Testament clearly teaches that believers are not bound to observe certain holy days, but it also underscores the importance of faith in Christ over specific days ([Colossians 2:16-17](#), [Romans 14:5-6](#)). In fact, the Bible does not command Christians to observe the Saturday Sabbath, but rather encourages us to joyfully worship God every day ([Hebrews 4:9-10](#)). Furthermore, [Revelation 13:16-17](#) discusses the mark of the beast in a context that involves allegiance and worship, but it does not explicitly connect this mark to the observance of Sunday or any specific day. In fact, the [mark of the beast](#) is to be understood as a spiritual mark rather than a physical one.

Investigative Judgment

A central doctrine in "The Great Controversy" is the concept of an "investigative judgment" where God examines each person's record to determine their salvation. White writes, "As the books of record are opened in the judgment, the lives of all who have believed on Jesus come in review before God" (p. 486). This teaching is not found anywhere in the Bible and contradicts the clear message of justification by faith ([Romans 5:1](#), [Titus 3:5](#)). The Bible declares that our salvation is secure in Christ and that there is no condemnation for those who are in Him ([John 5:24](#), [Romans 8:1](#)).

Prophetic Visions

Throughout "The Great Controversy," White presents her own visions and prophetic interpretations as authoritative. She states, "I was instructed to write out the things which were shown me in vision" (p. vi). However, the Bible warns against adding to or subtracting from God's word ([Revelation 22:18-19](#), [Deuteronomy 4:2](#)). The canon of Scripture is closed, and we are not to treat any human writings as equal to or superior to the inspired, inerrant Word of God. Unfortunately, White's role as a prophetess and her writings are considered authoritative by some Adventists (pp. ix-xii). [1 John 4:1](#) advises believers to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God," highlighting the need for discernment. Similarly, [Deuteronomy 18:20-22](#) sets a clear standard for prophecy: it must align with God's word and come to pass. Any deviation signifies a false prophecy.

Demonology

"The Great Controversy" also contains exaggerated and unbiblical views of demon activity and Satan's involvement in earthly affairs. White writes extensively about the "powers of darkness" and their influence in the world, going beyond the balanced perspective presented in Scripture. While the Bible acknowledges the reality of spiritual warfare ([Ephesians 6:12](#)), it does not give the level of detailed, speculative information found in White's writings.

The Remnant Church

White identifies the Seventh-day Adventist Church as the remnant church, chosen by God to restore biblical truth (pp. 453-460). [Revelation 12:17](#) mentions the remnant: "the rest of her offspring, those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus." This description is broad and inclusive, not confined to a single denomination. In addition, [Ephesians 4:4-6](#) emphasizes unity in the body of Christ, which includes all believers: "There is one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism."

The Nature of God

Another area of concern is White's understanding of the nature of God. In "The Great Controversy," she depicts God as a harsh, vindictive judge who must be appeased through obedience and good works (p. 68). This contradicts the biblical portrayal of God as a loving, gracious, and merciful Father who seeks to reconcile humanity to Himself through the sacrifice of His Son ([John 3:16](#), [Ephesians 2:4-5](#)).

The Person of Christ

White's Christology also departs from biblical teaching in several ways. She denies the full deity of Christ, stating that He "partook of our sinful, fallen nature" (p. 48). This contradicts the clear testimony of Scripture that Jesus was fully God and fully man, yet without sin ([John 1:1, 14](#), [Colossians 2:9](#), [Hebrews 4:15](#)). Additionally, White's teachings on the nature of Christ's atonement do not align with the biblical understanding of His substitutionary, penal sacrifice ([Romans 5:8](#), [2 Corinthians 5:21](#)).

Conclusion

In conclusion, "The Great Controversy" by Ellen G. White contains numerous teachings that directly contradict the clear teachings of the Bible. As believers, we must be diligent to test all doctrines against the infallible standard of Scripture ([Acts 17:11](#)). By doing so, we can ensure that our faith is firmly grounded in the truth of God's word and not the traditions of men. The Bible alone is the inspired, inerrant, and authoritative revelation of God, and we must not elevate any other writings to the same level.

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